



For Immediate Release
4/23/10
PR10-10

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SANTA ANA, CA - Grace Whitcomb, diversity manager for [Southern California Edison](#), has been named Region IX Minority Small Business Champion of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Region IX covers California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii and Guam. Whitcomb will be honored, along with other individuals, at the [47th Annual Small Business Week Awards](#) luncheon, June 2nd, at the Embassy Suites Anaheim-South in Garden Grove.

The Minority Small Business Champion must be an individual who has fulfilled a commitment to support minority entrepreneurship by volunteering their time and resources and demonstrating efforts to help the minority small business community succeed.

Whitcomb was nominated by Sarah Gunther, president of Asian Community Development.

Whitcomb began her career with SCE in 1983. She is responsible for connecting diverse suppliers with SCE business opportunities and the development and implementation of business education programs for entrepreneurs. The focus of SCE's award-winning supplier diversity program is to increase contracting opportunities for small businesses and Women, Minority and Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises (W/M/DVBEs) and to assist them to better understand the company's procurement practices and procedures through consultation, business development workshops, seminars, trade shows and special outreach events.

A diversity manager is in a unique position to leverage a firm's resources to advance the interests of small businesses that might otherwise be overlooked. Whitcomb understands this and uses her knowledge and experience to help minority business owners remove roadblocks and navigate the sometimes complicated procurement processes that exist in large corporations like SCE. Whitcomb often provides guidance to small business owners in their application for W/M/DVBE certification. For example, when one vendor's application for W/M/DVBE certification was denied, Whitcomb encouraged the vendor to submit a point-by-point rebuttal letter and even wrote a letter to provide a testimonial that, based on SCE's knowledge and numerous interactions with the vendor, there was no question the vendor was eligible for the certification. The rebuttal was a success and the vendor was certified and is now doing business with SCE.

Whitcomb developed and implemented SCE's Business Edge Workshop Series eight years ago with the premise that, although not all small businesses are ready to sell their products or services to SCE, SCE could provide the tools to help small businesses build their competitive edge so that they could be better prepared to do business with the utility in the future. Whitcomb initiated a partnership with [SCORE](#), an SBA resource partner, to provide training on topics related to business and financial management. Workshops are now provided throughout Southern California.

The nomination package submitted on Whitcomb's behalf is full of letters of support and recognition she has received for supporting WMDVBE firms. She was named by [Women's Enterprise USA](#) as one of the '100 Women Impacting Supplier Diversity' in 2006. Whitcomb represents SCE on a number of advisory boards, including the [Asian Business Association of Orange County](#). She serves on the board of the [Orange County Chinese American Chamber of Commerce](#) and as the utility's liaison to various organizations, such as the [OC Presidents Council](#) and [NAWBO-OC](#). Advocacy for W/M/DVBEs is one of Whitcomb's primary duties. She can often be found participating in various W/M/DVBE procurement fairs, certification workshops and supporting outreach activities like SBA's annual [Small Business Week awards](#)

and trade fairs in collaboration with various business associations.

Every year since 1963, the President of the United States has proclaimed National Small Business Week to recognize the contributions of small businesses to the economic well-being of America. Small businesses are major contributors to the strength of the American economy. More than half of Americans either own or work for a small business. Sixty to eighty percent of new jobs in the country are created by small businesses. The SBA recognizes this special impact made by outstanding entrepreneurs and small business champions during festivities in Washington, D.C. in May and locally at the 47th Annual Small Business Week Awards on June 2nd in Garden Grove.

Registration for the awards luncheon is available at www.2010smallbizweek.eventbrite.com.

National Small Business Week information is available at www.nationalsmallbusinessweek.com.

Additional information about the 47th Annual Small Business Week Awards luncheon is available by contacting christopher.lorenzana@sba.gov or 714.560.7453.

Information about the U.S. Small Business Administration is available at www.sba.gov.